

Fun and activities – for the whole family.

"Now we can do it ourselves" – Edgar Clarke.



Back in the summer of 2005, there was little going on within the community of Preston that would cater for the whole family. Many out-of-school activities were very age-focused, often causing older children to be left out – the long holidays were – for some – a source of boredom rather than enjoyment.

That was when some concerned community residents decided to get together to do something about this. Fast forward to the present day, and 'Schools Out' – Preston's community-based charity that runs activities for the entire family – is going from strength to strength.

"We're based in an area that's not particularly 'good,'" explains Edgar Clarke, who is the charity's treasurer and a trustee. "There wasn't a lot going on."

"Now we've got over 350 kids on our register," he continues proudly, "and it's one of the biggest schemes in the region." The charity's website is now chock-full of photos and reports of activities, fun days and trips out that are clearly immensely appreciated by children and parents alike.

A layperson might query why computers are needed in such a practical hands-on community organisation – but the fact is that IT is essential, not just to keep costs down, but to ensure the charity continues to exist at all.

Who are they?
SCHOOLS OUT.

Where are they?
Preston.

What do they do?
Provide family activities during the school holidays.

How big are they?
Now 350 children registered.

What did they receive?
MS Windows Vista business upgrades and copies of Office Professional Plus; Symantec Norton Internet Security; Cisco PIX 501 Security Appliance

The outcome?
A computer system for the charity that wouldn't otherwise be feasible.

schoolsoutpreston.btik.com

"If you are trying to get a grant," explains Edgar, "they now require lots and lots of evidence and proof. You can't pull that together without a computer. Our registers – everything – it's all on Excel and Word."

"And all our documents are now done on Publisher – brochures, posters and flyers. We looked at the cost for getting 500 flyers printed – it was stupid money! Now we can do it ourselves."

It almost goes without saying therefore, that the CTX programme has been a boon for the charity, and donations from Microsoft, Symantec and Cisco have been very gratefully received. It's not been a question of 'getting it cheaper' for Schools Out – there simply isn't money in the pot for this sort of investment.

"We needed a camera to take pictures for publicity," recalls Edgar. "I had to pay for it myself – it was a lot of money."

The charity is now protected by a Cisco Security Appliance, and Symantec's Norton software, as Edgar puts it, "keeps everything simple". With a Microsoft backbone, the charity can now focus on what it's best at – providing a great resource for the community.